



NEWS RELEASE

United States Department of Agriculture • Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service • Legislative and Public Affairs
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USDA ANNOUNCES ASIAN LONGHORNED BEETLE SURVEY IN MASSACHUSETTS

WASHINGTON, Sept. 4, 2008--The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) announced that surveys are under way, in and around Worcester, Mass., to determine the scope of an Asian longhorned beetle (ALB) infestation in the area.

APHIS confirmed ALB in Worcester earlier this month after an alert citizen reported finding an unusual beetle in a maple tree. This is the first detection of the invasive pest in Massachusetts.

"These surveys will help us determine the extent of the ALB infestation in Worcester and will aid us in moving forward with a targeted eradication program," said Rebecca Bech, deputy administrator of APHIS' plant protection and quarantine program. "We are working closely with our counterparts at the state and local level to minimize the effects and spread of this devastating pest."

Inspection crews will survey the northern portion of Worcester and in the neighboring towns of Boylston, West Boylston, Holden and Shrewsbury. Crews will inspect ALB host tree species for signs of the beetle using a combination of ground work, specially trained tree climbers and bucket trucks.

APHIS and state officials immediately quarantined the infested area to stop the spread of the beetle. Currently, the quarantined area is 33-square miles, and the interstate and intrastate movement of ALB-host material is restricted. As the survey continues, APHIS and the state will continue to adjust the quarantine as needed. Officials will also host training sessions and workshops to assist businesses and individuals in complying with the quarantine and ALB regulations.

APHIS is working cooperatively with the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, the City of Worcester, the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources and the U.S. Forest Service to develop the Massachusetts ALB Cooperative Eradication Program.

Citizens can help by reporting sightings of the beetle and any signs of infestation. The adult ALB is a large, distinctive-looking insect measuring 1 to 1 1/2 inches long, not including its antennae. These antennae, which give the insect its common name, are as long as the body itself in females and almost twice the body length in males. The insect's body is shiny black with white spots; the antennae are banded in black and white.

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Signs of ALB infestation include: adult beetles themselves during the summer and until frost; the perfectly round exit holes (about 3/8 to 1/2 inch in diameter) made by adult beetles when they emerge from trees; the pockmarks on tree trunks and branches where female beetles deposited eggs; frass (wood shavings and saw dust) produced by larvae feeding and tunneling; early fall coloration of leaves or dead branches and running sap produced by the tree at the egg laying sites, or in response to larval tunneling.

To report signs or symptoms of ALB, please call the Massachusetts ALB program at (508) 799-8330. Reports in Massachusetts can also be made via the internet at MASSNRC.org. For more information on the ALB, please visit www.aphis.usda.gov.

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Note to Reporters: USDA news releases, program announcements and media advisories are available on the Internet. Go to the APHIS news release page at <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/newsroom>. Also, anyone with an e-mail address can sign up to receive APHIS press releases automatically. Send an e-mail message to lyris@mdrdlyriss10.aphis.usda.gov and leave the subject blank. In the message, type `subscribe press_releases`.